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Migrant Political Participation and Voting Behavior in Romania

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Abstract

The results of the first round 2014 presidential elections in Romania predicted a comfortable win for the incumbent Prime Minister Victor Ponta, the president of the Social Democratic Party. After the first round, Ponta held a 10% lead over the Christian-Liberal Alliance candidate Klaus Iohannis. The runoff campaign was marked by reports displayed on all TV channels showing the Romanian Diaspora not being able to vote abroad. Surprisingly, Klaus Iohannis, who obtained 54% of the votes, won the second round of elections. Iohannis obtained 89% of Diaspora's votes, adding a 4% gain in front of his contender. In most studies on electoral behavior, the focus for explaining why people go to vote is centered at the level of the "country, election, electoral cohort or individual voter" (Franklin 2004). Notably absent from these studies is the impact Diaspora on the election results and the predictors of turnout. The impact on national elections of this category of citizens is not to be neglected and it becomes important especially in democratizing states. In this vein we focus on the predictors that lie behind the political participation and preferences of Romanian Diaspora. We will test two basic models that explain participation (Franklin 2004). First there is research that focuses on the social determinants of voting (Verba and Nie 1972) labeled as "the baseline model". Another stream of studies includes electoral system effects and political system format (Blais and Aarts 2006, Cox 1997, Franklin 2004). We claim that Romanian Diaspora voters participate in higher numbers in presidential elections when the number of voting stations increases. Romanian diaspora consistently votes with center right wing parties and candidates. This vote is associated with liberal policy preferences and support for issues that promote libertarian attitudes. We test these hypotheses with elections results data from 2000 to 2014 coupled with data collected from Votulmeu.com an online Voting Advice Application from the 2014 presidential elections in Romania.

Introduction

The first round of the 2014 presidential elections in Romania predicted a comfortable win for the incumbent Prime Minister Victor Ponta, the president of the Social Democratic Party. After the first round, Ponta held a 10% lead over the Christian-Liberal Alliance ethnic German candidate Klaus Iohannis. The runoff campaign was marked by reports displayed on all TV channels showing the Romanian labor migrants not being able to vote abroad in the first round. Surprisingly, Klaus Iohannis, who obtained 54% of the votes, won the second round of elections. Romanian migrants queued at the Romanian embassies and consulates, massively mobilized via Facebook, and organized ad-hoc street protests in front of voting stations when they were not able to cast their votes. They overtly supported Iohannis for the second round of elections and reacted strongly against the Romanian government handling of external voting in the first election round. The importance of the impact of migrant political behavior and attitudes is not singular to Romania. In Nigeria, president Jonathan contemplates on allowing Diaspora to vote starting 2015 (Adichie 2014) but only after the Nigerian Diaspora collected signatures to permit the right to vote and several protests. In Scotland, at the 2014 referendum, up to 800,000 Scottish people living in England expressed discontent about not having the opportunity to express their preferences (Mycock, 2014). In some rare cases, Diasporas had been a decisive effect on the national politics of origin countries. In 2006, in Italy, Romano Prodi won a majority in the Senate with the help of the expats voting abroad. In the United States, the military overseas played an important role in providing support for the republican candidate George W. Bush while, at the same time, the civilian elections were poorly organized (Christie 2004). For politicians and political scientist the political role of the emigrants is starting to become of particular concern. How does large-scale emigration affect the politics of the sending societies? Long concerned with question on when and why immigrants impact electoral politics few scholars started to investigate how does emigration impact the politics of the sending countries. This gap is troubling given the increasing number of emigrant populations that often cast a decisive vote in the country of origin electoral contests. To gain a complete understanding of the impact of emigrants on national politics and particularly if they are a distinct electoral block researchers must address certain puzzles. These include a comparison of emigrant and non-emigrant political participation; whether emigrants vote differently than the citizens that did not

emigrate; institutional constraints on voting; determinants of emigrant voter turnout; and whether emigrants have different issues that determine their voting preferences than those that did not leave their country. There are a few studies that address the political preferences and partisan identities of emigrants. Admittedly this stream of research is facing the challenge of scarce data resources. This paper begins to fill this gap by investigating the political behavior of the emigrant population of one of the most important European countries with recently emigrated population: Romania. The aim is to evaluate the impact of emigration experience. As a first step the paper will ask whether the political participation of emigrants and their political preferences differ from the non-emigrant citizens. Namely we focus on elections results to tap party preferences and on preferences on key issues such as welfare state and minority rights. As a second step we explore the determinants of turnout by focusing on type of election and number of voting stations and find which political preferences determine voting intentions of emigrants compared to non-emigrants.

These issues are important in all countries of emigration but the investigation is focused on Romania for practical and theoretical reasons. Firstly emigrant political behavior and its impact on the politics of the country of origin is becoming a highly salient topic in Europe and it is likely to remain so in the future. Secondly most studies of emigrant impact on the politics of the sending country is focused on US and Mexico. Finally Romanian migrants have become important political actors in Romania. In the 2009 and 2014 presidential elections their contribution to the election results made former Prime Minister Adrian Nastase wonder whether emigrants should enjoy the political rights of the country they have left behind. From 2007, since Romania joined the European Union, to 2014 more than three million Romanians went abroad for work, study or join their families. The electoral strength of the emigrant Romanian electorate has prompted main political parties in Romania to devise strategies and deliver promises to capture the emigrant vote, an entirely new phenomenon in Romanian politics. On a practical level, the election results of emigrant voting is provided at the voting section level by the National Electoral Authority. Secondly, the Voting Advice Application (an online application that compares the political preferences of users to political parties) “Votul meu” (My Vote) for the presidential elections in 2014 yielded approximately 1400 users, which voted abroad. Although fraught with issues of accurate representation, these data provide a rare opportunity to

survey the emigrant issue preferences and compare them to those that did not emigrate from Romania.

The political participation of emigrants will be restricted to turnout. Voting is one of the most used forms of political participation. Building on these data we will take into account the variation in the institutional design type of elections and the number of voting stations in a country on turnout.

We investigate the attitudes of emigrants on attitudes towards the market and minority rights (Kitschelt 1992). These issues have defined Romanian electoral politics since 1989 and are contested issues. We expect that that Romanian emigrants would be more supportive of the market and be more open to minority rights than non-emigrants. Further on, we explain how these preferences relate to partisan and presidential candidate support. We use regression to test whether migrant political preferences on issues affect their political choices they intend to make.

The article proceeds as follows. The next section relates this study to the relevant literature on migrant political behavior followed by a short overview of Romanian post 1989 emigration history. We then turn to data analysis and discuss the evolution of emigrant political participation starting from 2004 and display the differences on political preferences between emigrants and non-migrants in Romania. Next we evaluate the impact type of elections, the number of voting sections on turnout followed by the assessment of the impact policy preferences have on emigrant political behavior. Conceptual fuzziness characterizes the usage of terms such as Diaspora, migrant, trans-national community or citizens living abroad (Sheffer 2003). This paper, due to the complexity of migration circumstances does not emphasize distinctions and characteristics. Most migrants can be qualified as “unskilled immigrant group that is locked into a subordinate status” (Cohen 1997, 163). Others are highly skilled and some are long settled while others are recent migrants. The reasons to migrate are also diverse. Some escaped their oppressive regimes; others left their country when the regime permitted, such as the Eastern Europeans. Some have and ideal view of their home community other despise it. Some plan to return while others do not know yet. Given that the focus of the project is on political participation, rights, attitudes and behavior there is no operational reason to differentiate among migrants and restrict the use of the term Diaspora. There is no cost associated with grouping migrants all together as Diaspora or emigrants since formally the country of origin treats them in

the same way. Diaspora, emigrants, migrants terms however do not include occasional visitors, tourists and business travelers.

The Political Role of Romanian Migrants

The story of emigration from Romania took place in three important historical stages. During communism, diaspora was largely dissident. Given the restrictions to travelling abroad, the Romanian politically active diasporic community was composed of people that emigrated illegally, were expelled by the communist authorities or chose not to return once they arrived to a democratic country risking their family's safety back home. The Romanian dissidence movement was feeble (Angi 2011). Political participation occurred mainly through protests of intellectuals broadcasted through Radio Free Europe. Paul Goma, Mihai Botez and others issues communiques and open letters addressed to the communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu. Dissidents residing in Romania often wrote the letters. The Diaspora intermediated the publication of these documents altering the image of Ceausescu as a good communist friendly to Western European leaders. The response of the communist regime was to try to repress Diaspora with the help of the Romanian Secret Police.

The second stage began after the fall of the communist regime in December 1989 that emphasized the role of the kin communities living in the neighboring countries. The 1991 Romanian constitution recognized the existence of Romanian communities abroad and established polling stations in embassies and consulates. The government focused on the strengthening of the ethnic identity of Romanians living in Hungary, Moldova, Ukraine and Serbia. Most of the initiatives focused on symbolic politics (Iordachi, 2004) to strengthen the existence of a transnational community.

A wave of emigration took place in the years following the regime changes. Nearly 100,000 Romanians changed their residence to a domicile abroad. At the same time a wave of immigration took place from Moldova a country with a majority Romanian-speaking population. The majority of emigrants consisted of ethnic Germans and Hungarians. During communism the western Germany officials negotiated the emigration of ethnic Germans by offering money to the Romanian authorities for each person. In this way approximately 200,000 ethnic migrants left Romania (Adevarul.ro, 2010). After the regime change most ethnic Germans left Romania.

Citizenship problems with Hungary were complicated. In 2004 the Hungarian government organized a referendum to discuss the awarding of citizenship rights to the three million Hungarians living in Romania. The referendum was annulled due to low turnout. Later the Hungarian government adopted the “Act of Hungarians living in neighboring countries” that offered symbolic citizenship. A few years later the Hungarian government enacted the law that was defeated in referendum allowing anyone who could prove the Hungarian origin, to receive the Hungarian citizenship. The immigrants consisted of Moldovan citizens. The supporters of granting political rights to Diaspora successfully lobbied for Romanians living in Moldova to acquire Romanian citizenship. Around 200,000 Moldovan citizens received formal Romanian citizenship through this special procedure. The number of Moldovan citizens applying for Romanian citizenship increased after Romania joined the European Union.

The third stage the focus on identity construction was replaced by economic concerns related to European labor migration. This process started in 2001 with the European Union officials’ decision to lift visa requirements for Romanian citizens. This decision was a first step that facilitated the access of Romanian to the EU labor market. The Spanish government was most visible in trying to employ a large number of temporary workers from Romania, a program that was successful also due to the language similarities between Spanish and Romanian. In 2007, with Romania becoming a member of the European Union, the labor oriented migration accelerated. In 2008, Spanish and Italian authorities reported 1 million legal Romanian residents (Adevarul 2009). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a “Department for Relations of Romanians from Abroad” that elaborated policies related to the Romanians living abroad (Soros 2009). In 2008 a new electoral law established special parliamentary seats for Romanians living abroad. Political parties focused their electoral campaigning in Italy and Spain. Attention to the votes from Diaspora was great during the 2009 presidential elections. The news media showed Romanians queuing. The process of voting took longer time because each voter had to fill in a form and sign a statement that they would not and did not vote in another polling station. Due to the closeness of the election results the Diaspora’s vote input mattered determining the winner in these critical elections. The most contested voting station was in Paris where in 14 hours 3785 voters casted a vote triggering suspicions of fraud. The vote recount did not result in a change of the final count. In 2014 attention to the votes of Diaspora became great again. In the first round of the presidential elections the new media showed again Romanians queuing at the Romanian

embassies and consulates. Several Romanians living abroad were not able to cast a vote due to the high participation. This led to protests in UK, Germany, Austria, Belgium and Italy that were portrayed across European media. Representatives of Diaspora blamed the deficient organization of the electoral process by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and asked for more polling stations and voting booths for the second round of the presidential elections. The refusal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to respond to the demands of Diaspora led to his resignation. Yet, in spite of the second round of elections taking place with two polling stations less the turnout of Diaspora doubled. In seven polling stations there were more than 4000 votes casted in 14 hours. The highest reported turnout (4626) was at a voting station in London. Similarly to 2009, the polling agencies projected Ponta as a winner. The next day, after the votes were counted from abroad the outcome was overturned. Iohannis gathered more than 89% from the Diaspora determining again the winner in a critical election. The next section reviews other studies that investigate the political role of emigrants.

Migrant Political Behavior

Most migration studies emphasize the political integration of migrants in the host community and analyze political participation from that perspective (Audebert and Dorai 2010, Baubock 2006, Black et al. 2010, Dancygier and Saunders 2006, Dijstelbloem and Meijer 2011, Wallace and Stola 2001). These studies focus on political integration that seems to be dependent on how permissive is the host state with granting political rights (Martinielo 2006). There are two key approaches to the analysis of attitudes of migrants and their involvement in the politics of the country of origin. First there are examples where the granting of political rights is the result of emigrants pressuring governments in the country of origin. Migrants exert pressures on less liberal regimes (Østergaard-Nielsen 2012, Koinova 2009) through lobbying donor organizations (Koinova 2009) or sending out calls for democracy and human rights as it was the case for the diaspora of the former communist regimes in Eastern Europe (Falk 2003). Being offered an exit from the political system, dictators hoped to reduce the number of voices that support liberalization. In turn, migrants became agents of democratization from outside. Oppressive regimes attempted to reduce voting opportunities like in Zimbabwe where only military and

consular service officers living abroad are allowed to vote (Magaisa 2008) or in Uganda, Ghana, and Zimbabwe voting rights of the Diaspora were reduced (Boateng 2005). According to the second approach the political participation of migrants is shaped by a discussion about citizenship (Baubock 2006, Shevel 2014, Ziemer and Roberts 2013). Voting rights of a Diaspora confronts the question regarding the appropriate conceptualization of a political community that increasingly becomes mobile. On the one hand extending voting rights to expatriates is the main element of political integration with the goal of full political inclusion for all of a nation's citizens and social groups. On the other hand expatriates are seen as renegades who should not be permitted a say in government selection since they are not affected to the same extent by its decisions, laws, and regulations as citizens living in the home country. If one is to follow the principle of "No Taxation Without Representation," migrants that do not pay taxes in the home country should not have political rights. In both instances the Diaspora is often a marginalized category, both by the country of origin that views them as outside the political community and by a host country that views them as foreign, temporary, and perhaps, second-class inhabitants. States in transition are more likely to enfranchise groups that were previously excluded or marginal or enemies to national politics (Østergaard-Nielsen 2012, 72). There are significant examples of countries that extended the rights of migrants (IDEA 2007) during transition from authoritarian rule. The political influence of migrants in the country of origin is especially important in the context of the wave of migration from East-Central Europe to Western Europe. The type of migration that occurs from East to West is *liquid* (Snel et al. 2006) with temporary migrants going back and forth and having a more determined goal to settle in the home country. However, these approaches do not sufficiently consider the impact of the behavior and attitudes of emigrants towards the democratic political process of the country of origin. The former emphasizes the pressure for liberalization of authoritarian regimes and focuses less on consolidation of democracy. The latter focuses on normative discussions of citizenship rights in the origin and host countries and less on their use and impact on the attitudes of migrants (Baubock 2006).

The political participation of Diaspora in the origin country is an increasingly relevant phenomenon (except: Baubock 2006, Martinielo 2006, Burean 2011, Ostengard and Ciornei 2012). Findings show that granting voting rights to Diaspora accelerates the diffusion of liberal principles to neighboring countries (Turcu and Urbatsch 2015). In Mexico, migrants remit

democracy through external lobbying, voting from abroad and, upon return, by influencing others to be involved in politics (Perez-Armedaniz and Crow 2010). In Eastern European countries returned migrants have political attitudes that support European Union institutions and inherit a stronger sense of political efficacy (Careja and Emmenegger 2012).

Voting is one of the most popular forms of political participation (Blais 2000) and is an indicator of democratic quality (Fieldhouse et al. 2007). Increasing turnout has become an important objective in Europe especially following the lowering turnout rates in national (Rubenson et al. 2007) but mostly in European elections. One method to foster turnout is by facilitating access to vote for excluded or marginalized groups. Lowering the voting age (Wagner et al 2012) produced positive effects in increasing turnout. Allowing migrants to vote at elections could be one method of increasing turnout and improving the democratic quality of a state.

There is a substantial amount of research dedicated to turnout (Blais 2000, Franklin 2004, Blais, Massicotte and Dobrzynska 2003). Generally, turnout (Blais and Aarts, 2006) is increased by compulsory voting, registration to vote and the salience of elections. Romanian migrants turn out to vote in countries where the number of voting station is increased (Burean 2011). More Romanians voting abroad turn out to vote in presidential elections and in countries that are more democratic (Burean 2011). The adoption of certain rules that facilitate voting does not necessarily foster higher turnout (Blais 2007). Blais, Massicotte and Dobrzynska (2002), Franklin (1996) and Norris (2004) find inconsistent results in decreasing the costs of voting. However, for migrants, the impact of lowering the costs of voting can have substantial effects. That is because unlike for voters that vote at their residential area migrants' voting costs can be substantially higher. To rephrase Blais (2000, 89) for migrants the substantial decrease in the cost of voting matters substantially. Shortening the distance between voters and their voting stations by creating more voting booths or simplifying the vote (no registration) has a positive impact on turnout (Burean 2011). Therefore lowering the voting costs, such as increasing the number of voting stations (Hypothesis 1) increases turnout.

The type of elections migrants participate in seems to matter. Generally, turnout is higher in presidential elections and lower in local elections (Blais 2007). Turnout in legislative elections is weaker where the president matters more (Siaroff and Merre 2002). We hypothesize that the presidential elections to bring more emigrants to the polls (Hypothesis 2).

Emigration is a result of an individual-self selection process that would yield systemic differences between emigrant and the non-migrant population.

The presence of migrants changes attitudes in host and origin countries (De Haas 2005) especially when migrants' socio economic status suffers dramatic changes (van Meeteren, Engbersen and van San 2009). One might postulate the economic interests would dictate preferences for candidates that encourage less redistribution and more private economic initiative. Few studies ask whether migrants acquire democratic attitudes and become agents of democratization in their home countries. Mexican migrants that live in the United States remit democratization from abroad by voting and pressuring authorities of the country of origin for reforms. Careja and Emmenegger (2012) find that the financially successful return migrants from Eastern Europe have a stronger sense of political efficacy, are more satisfied with democracy and have a higher support for the EU.

Political attitudes are influenced by socio demographic characteristics (Almond and Verba 1989) and institutional context (Anderson and Tverdova 2011). The reason to emigrate is a factor that significantly impacts the granting of voting rights. Refugees from war torn countries, political asylum recipients can have stronger pro democratic attitudes. At the same time ethnic emigrants would have more hostile attitudes towards the political system of the country of origin (Koinova 2009).

The emigration experience in a consolidated democracy increases satisfaction with democracy (Careja and Emmenegger 2012, Perez-Armedaniz and Crow, 2010, Camp 2003) although some of the temporary migrants have minimal contact with the host country and rely on the bonding social capital of their co nationals. Yet financial success can have positive effects towards the attitudes towards the regime, political participation and political interest (Mishler and Rose 2001, Williams and Balaz 2006) of the host country with spills over effects on evaluations of the regime in the country of origin. Hence migrants have more liberal values than non-migrants. I expect emigrants to have more liberal preferences on economy and on granting minority rights (Hypothesis 3). These translate in support for parties that promise radical reforms that take the shape of new political parties and presidential candidates that are independent from the old political parties (Hypothesis 4). Controls include socio-demographics (education, age, gender), past vote, party identification and political interest.

Methodology

This is a case study on the political participation and voting behavior of the emigrants from Romania. As a case study its relevance relies on inspecting a phenomenon that is deviant from the classical studies of voting behavior and political participation and it has a potential impact on comparative studies. This study is relevant in the sense that it takes into account, besides the classical determinants of political supports, the experience of migration. This element seems to be particularly important in the Romanian context. The paper investigates what motivates Romanian migrants to have center-right, liberal political preferences. More generally it tries to understand emigrants role in the politics of the country of origin by describing a case where this has implications on who gets elected in the presidential office. The selection of the 2014 presidential elections data is fortunate. Similarly to 2009, the Romanian Diaspora's electoral support for the candidate of the center right National Liberal Party produced a stunning result with Klaus Iohannis gaining on the 10% deficit he had in the first round of the 2014 Romanian presidential elections and ultimately winning the elections.

The relationship between turnout, number of voting stations and type of elections is investigated through cross tabulations of elections results gathered from the website of the Permanent Electoral Authority. Voting behavior is operationalized as a dummy variable that measures the vote for Klaus Iohannis. The Romanian VAA Votulmeu.com data contains thirty questions on issues and a few socio demographics. The selection of the most important issues is done with Mokken scaling that led to the selection of eight issues that seem to compose an economic and a distribution of rights dimension. The left right self-placement taps on the level of economic liberalism. The GAL-TAN tests users permissiveness on the distribution on rights. These were transformed into dummy variables that measure the economic liberal placement and liberal distribution of rights. Candidate selection variable taps on whether the candidate is preferred because of the ideas she/he promotes and it is also a dichotomous variable. The preference for issues were transformed into dichotomous variables and measure support for an issue. Table 4 shows the eight issues that were identified as relevant. Socio demographics include age, measured through the year of birth, gender and education. The education variable separates university graduates from other citizens. We use binomial logistic regression since the dependent variable is nominal and independent variables are dichotomous and continuous (age). The

estimates we use are b logit coefficients that measure the direction of the relationship between variables. There are three types of predictors used: socio-demographic variables (age, gender, education), political variables (party identification with a center right party, past reported vote, interest in politics) and issues (reason for the selection of the candidate, GAL-TAN, left-right, support for private health care, reduce public sector, market economy, gay rights, use of marijuana, abortion, religion in school, church in public life). These are added one at a time to evaluate their effects when introduced as a set of explanatory variables.

The first set of regressions uses the entire database to assess the effect of what Dancygier and Saunders (2006) in a similar study on immigrants termed the *self-selection hypothesis* (p.967) that measures the opinion gaps among migrants and population that does not migrate. This hypothesis explains the inherent differences that result from the different life experiences of migrants and non-migrants. The second set of regressions are done on the migrant and non emigrant population in order to observe if the explanatory predictors have different effects on emigrants from non-migrants.

Data

The scope of the paper is to link the turnout and the election results to information about emigrant programmatic preferences with the help of data obtained from the Voting Advice Application, hereafter “VAA”. The online revolution proved to be a solid ground for the development of VAAs. Created initially as paper-and-pencil tests in the late 1990s (Ruusuvirta, 2010, Gemenis and Rosema, 2014), VAAs became used worldwide, with millions of users seeking advice during electoral campaigns. Initially implemented in the Netherlands, then Switzerland and Germany, VAAs are now present in almost all European countries (exceptions are Malta and Slovenia) (Garzia and Marschall, 2012). VAAs are present in second-order elections as well, with the EU Profiler and EUvox in the elections for the European parliament in 2009 and 2014. VAAs are campaigning tools that eliminate the cost of information, offering a tailored advice, simulating the context of full information. The growing importance of issue voting (Dalton, 1996, Franklin et al., 2009) following Downs (1957) spatial model, where every policy can be placed on a left-right continuum, is accommodated by the VAAs (Cedroni and Garzia, 2010). In order for issue voting to be meaningful, voters have to have clear issue preferences, parties have to compete over the same policy issues (Nie and Verba, 1979) and

voters have to be able to identify their position relative to the position of parties (Butler and Stokes 1969). VAAs help voters in making more informed political decisions, lowering the costs of information, by presenting to the voter the parties' position on salient policy positions, by comparing, based on an algorithm, the position of the user with the position of the parties, and presenting the user with a rank-order list of parties, following a proximity logic (Cedroni and Garzia, 2010). As a web survey tool, the quality of VAA data suffers from overall survey error, made out of coverage error, sampling error, non-response error and measuring error (Dilman, 2011 in Andreadis, 2014). Coverage error occurs when part of the population cannot be included in the sample; in the case of VAAs, this has to do with Internet usage, more specifically with the Internet penetration rate and Internet literacy. Sampling error represents the inaccuracy in estimating a certain quantity based on the sample, when the entire population is not available; here, the sampling error has to do with the self-selection bias of users into using the tool. Non-response error occurs when users do not respond to questions, and this pattern can be discerned when compared to the answers of other users. Measurement error occurs when the answers provided by the users are wrong or inaccurate (Andreadis, 2014).

VAA sites attract many users, generating very large datasets on the political preferences of its users. Additionally, users can fill out the pop-up survey, which contains questions on socio-demographics, such as age, gender, occupation, as well as further questions about their party affiliation. VAA generated data have increasingly been used as a substitute for survey data for explaining political phenomena as positioning of parties and voters and voting behavior. Although extremely cost effective, the use of this type of data is criticized. This is due to the bias the VAA generated data carries. The most important caveat one has to acknowledge when dealing with VAA is that the data is not representative of the population at large. More precisely, the data is biased towards the young, better educated (Marschall and Schultze, 2012), from urban areas, with more left-wing orientation (Mendez and Wheatley, 2014). An additional bias is represented by the gender, with two-thirds of the respondents being male (Mendez and Wheatley 2014). The Romanian VAA *Votulmeu.com* organized for the 2014 presidential elections contained 18000 users. 1441 declared that they vote abroad. Despite its obvious limitations this data offers a chance to glance at the issue preferences of Romanian emigrants. Thus this application offers a unique chance to access a population that is often not present in surveys. Although some research institutes such as CURS and Metromedia Transylvania implemented

surveys on Romanian migrants living abroad they do not contain information about their voting behavior and programmatic preferences. One way to find surveys that include migrants from Romania is to find them with in the Eurobarometer data following the Careja and Emmenegger (2012) study. This was not a successful solution due to the extremely small number of citizens that were living outside Romania and declared themselves as coming from Romania in the 2014 Eurobarometer surveys. Not having an accurate picture of the emigrating population of Romania makes it difficult to assess the representativeness of the 1441 Romanians that declared that they would vote abroad and used the Romanian VAA. The users of the 2014 VAA are highly educated, young and predominantly male. Thus the interpretation of these data has to be done by having in mind these serious limitations.

Turnout, Type of Election and the Number of Polling Stations

The survey of electoral results permits ecological analyses of the determinants of turnout of Romanian that vote abroad and their political preferences. The National Electoral Authority made the data on Diaspora available. This department publishes the number of migrant voters who turned out for every election since 2000 the total number, for individual country and for each voting station abroad. The voting preferences of migrants are available since 2007 at an aggregate level. Since 2008 these results are published at the voting station level for parliamentary, euro elections, referenda and the first and second rounds of presidential elections. It is a challenge however to estimate the percentage of Romanians that lives abroad and that participates in elections. Previous estimates (Burean 2011) claim that around 1,7 million voting Romanians live abroad. This figure was computed as a sum of official reports from the Italian and Spanish authorities where most Romanian migrants live. I used census data to find out how many children live in Romania subtracted children from the reports given by Spanish and Italian authorities. Specific data about the turnout of Romanians that live abroad are available only since 2000. Up until 2008 all votes from abroad were summed up to one electoral district in Bucharest. The percentage of Romanians voting abroad is low when compared to the estimate of 1,7 million voters. The peak turnout was registered in the 2014 presidential elections in which 22% of the emigrant voting population participated. One explanation for the low turnout is that citizens are not especially interested in the politics of their home country since they do not seem to be directly affected.

From 2000 to 2014 there is a gradual increase in turnout (Table 1). The increase must be viewed with caution. One reason is that simply more Romanians went abroad when the visa requirements were lifted in 2002 and with Romania joining the EU in 2007. This trend continues after 2007. Turnout correlates with the number of voting stations and the type of elections. Presidential elections bring more migrants to the polls while European elections and parliamentary elections bring the least voters confirming the interest only for elections that involve the president viewed as a symbol of the nation. Another explanation for the low turnout is the time, expense and the energy required by the Diaspora to vote. Therefore the number of voting stations for Romanians should lead to an increase in turnout. Other tools of reducing voting costs include e-voting, postal vote or vote by proxy. However these alternatives require some sort of registration system. Table 1 shows that the number of voting stations nearly doubled from 152 in 2000 to 306 in 2012 and witnessed a small decline to 292 in the second round of the 2014 presidential elections. The greatest increase in polling stations occurred in Italy (from 2 in 2000 to 55 in 2009 and to 51 in 2014) in Spain (from 1 in 2000 to 38 in 2014) and in Moldova (from 1 in 2000 to 13 in 2009 and 21 in 2014). In other countries the number of voting stations fluctuated. In Great Britain from one voting station in 2000 it to fourteen in 2008, 8 in 2009 to 11 in 2014. In USA there were 21 polls in 2000, 30 in 2008, 29 on 2009 and 22 in 2014. In France the number of voting stations decreased from 10 to 8 and in Poland it increased from 1 in 2009 to 3 in 2014. Most of the countries had less out of the 96 had less than three voting stations with minor variations. Voter turnout witnessed large variations. In 2000 in Italy there were less than 1000 voters. In the 2004 this number quadrupled. In 2009 42,676 turned out to vote in the runoff presidential elections. In 2014, 96600 turned out to vote. A similar increase is to be observed in Spain, Moldova, Germany, Great Britain, USA and Austria. In Spain from 809 voters in 2000, and 35911 in 2009, the turnout increased to 82744. In Germany the turnout increased from 1709 in 2000 to 17506 in 2014 while in the UK it jumped from 616 voters in 2000 to 25850 in 2014. USA and Austria showed similar trends. In the US the turnout increased from 6276 (2000) to 17683 (2014) while in Austria with no change in the number of voting stations it increased from 678 (in 2000) to 9533 (in 2014). From the data in aggregate and in country-by-country it seems plausible that the number of voting stations had a positive effect. The data reported from the National Electoral Authority reports the number of voting stations and turnout for every country. Treating each country for each election as a separate case (n=1682) the correlation between

turnout and the number of polling station is strong ($r = 0.724$). The correlation is strong even after subdividing the data by type of election (parliamentary $r = .852$, presidential $r = .814$, referendum $r = .818$, Euroelections $= .589$). Regression analysis permitted the analyses of the influence of polling station number and type of elections as a series of dummies. The effect of the number of polling station is dramatic ($b = 626.643$ $se = 14.53$). An increase in the number of voting stations brings more citizens to vote. Presidential elections bring more voters to the polls. The increase of voting stations where there are migrants improves the voting conditions and boosts turnout. The next section focuses on the voting preferences of the Diaspora and attempt to provide an explanation for the 2014 election results.

--Table 1--

Political Preferences of Romanian Emigrants

Klaus Iohannis obtained 89,73% of the migrant vote in the 2014 presidential second-round runoff, receiving 338,873 of the 377,651 votes. His majority helped in winning him the presidency. Iohannis garnered almost three times the number of votes than the previous president Traian Basescu (115,831). It is not surprising that Iohannis was popular in Diaspora. Candidates from center right parties perform better than candidates of the left. This claim holds for the Czech and the Polish Diaspora (Doyle and Fidrmuc 2005). Table 2 records the vote of the Romanian Diaspora since 2007. The vote percentages for the main Romanian political parties show a remarkable consistency in the vote. PD-L, PNL, ARD (The Right Romania Alliance) was a plurality winner in elections until 2012. Since then new parties and their candidates became increasingly popular with Diaspora. In the 2014 EP elections it was PMP (Popular Movement Party) that won the elections in Diaspora with 28.63% of the valid votes. In the first round 2014 presidential elections Monica Macovei independent candidate came in third (24,342) just behind Victor Ponta (25,466 votes) and in front of Elena Udrea (15,656). Thus even if there is a shift in the Diaspora vote to new parties, this shift remains within the center-right ideological camp. PSD never won more than one fifth of the vote in Diaspora.

--Table 2 --

Not surprisingly Iohannis was the plurality winner in the first round of the presidential election garnering 46% of the vote. What was surprising that in the second round similarly to the former president Basescu in 2009 he increased dramatically his margin in the second round compared to the first round of elections. In Romania it was Victor Ponta that was the plurality winner having a 10% advantage against Iohannis. In the second round Iohannis increased his margin with 14% compared to the extra five percentage points obtained by Ponta. In the Diaspora, Iohannis's percentage grew by 43 percentage points while Ponta's percentage points actually decreased with 5%. Iohannis's gain was double than that of Basescu in 2009. This is not necessarily a result that shows that even Ponta's voters shifted their votes to Iohannis. It might be an effect of the more than doubling of the turnout between the first and the second round. Perhaps the turnout increased because Diaspora anticipated a second round and given the difficulties related to travel many decided to vote only in the second round. It is thus more likely that the increasing support for Iohannis came from new voters that showed up in the second round. A geographical inspection seems unnecessary to see where the votes for Iohannis came from. Starting the 2009 elections it is possible to scrutinize the country-level voting results for the Romanians that cast a vote outside the borders of Romania. The support for Iohannis was uniformly strong across all continents. Compared to Basescu in 2009, in the first round Iohannis won in 89 out of the 95 countries that had polling stations for Romanians. Iohannis lost elections in North Korea to Victor Ponta (by one vote out of the 7 casted votes) and in Brazil (by 3 votes), in Cuba to Monica Macovei (by one vote out of the 22 votes) and not surprisingly, in Hungary, to Kelemen Hunor. He had the same amount of votes with Ponta and Macovei (5 votes) in Angola and he had the equal number of votes with Victor Ponta (5) in Armenia. In the second round, Iohannis won in 93 of the 94 countries where voting polls existed. Klaus Iohannis lost to Victor Ponta in Palestine by one vote. Ponta obtained 10 votes and Iohannis 9. In 27 countries, Iohannis obtained more than 90% of the vote. These include countries where there are many Romanian migrants. These include Spain, United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Canada, Ireland and Austria. In Italy he obtained 88% of the votes. Iohannis's triumph among Romanian migrants was overwhelming. A more systematic analysis is required to better understand the variation for the support for Iohannis in the first round. Given the extremely limited availability of surveys on political preferences of migrants and especially the surveys of Romanian migrants in 2014, we decided to use to make use of the data available from the VAA

Votulmeu.com. Out of the more than 18000 users we could identify 1441 persons that declared that they would vote abroad. These data are not a representative sample of Romanian migrants. More than 70% of the users that declared that they vote abroad have graduated a university and nearly half of them have post graduate studies. Half of them are male. The data excludes the migrants that do not know how to use a computer. Yet given this severe limitations one could get an estimate of the opinions of an elite of migrants that are also more likely to turn out to vote and are interested in politics. Table 3 compares the elections results with the voting intentions of users of the VAA. Voters of Victor Ponta are severely under represented while the supporters of Monica Macovei are over represented.

---Table 3---

Next, using a dimension reduction technique, out of the thirty statements we identified eight issues that compose an economic and a distribution of rights dimension (Table 4). Then we compared the political preferences of VAA users that declared that they would vote abroad to those voting domestically. The data support the center right orientation of migrants (Table 5). On economic issues migrant users support a pro-market type of economy similarly to the non-migrant users. On the distribution of rights migrants support to a greater extent gay rights (19 percentage point more in favor) and are more pro-choice (7% more) while non-migrants are more supportive to teach religion in public schools (7% more). The VAA application contained several socio demographic and political preference questions such as past vote behavior, party identification, political interest, voting intention, left right self placement and the reasons for choosing a presidential candidate. Thus using binomial regression we tested for three categories of likely determinants of the vote for Iohannis: socio-demographics, political variables and preferences on issues. We added a Migrant dummy variable to find out whether being a migrant has an effect on the voting preference controlling for other possible determinants (Table 6). The results show that being a migrant is related to a decreased likelihood to vote for Iohannis. This affect however disappears once the “reason for selecting the candidate”. This variable separates those that declared that they vote candidate because of his ideas or for some other reasons. The results show that the strongest predictor for the vote for Iohannis is identification with a center-right party. Iohannis it is more likely to be voted by those that feel close to a center right party, did not vote in the previous elections that did not choose him because of his ideas and support

religion in schools (Table 6). Next we compared the predictors for the vote for Iohannis for migrants with on-migrants (Table 7). The results show that Iohannis attracted new migrant voters that feel close to center right wing political parties and did not choose him because of his ideas. There was no effect of issue voting for migrants or non-migrants.

---Table 6---

---Table 7---

The data show statistical associations between the support for Iohannis and party identification, past voting behavior but not issues and socio-demographic variables. The strongest predictor found was the identification with a right-wing political party and past voting behavior. What is interesting is that migrant voters are more likely to be inclusive with gay rights, are pro-choice and reject religion in schools. Is it likely that the Romanians living abroad have internalized the values and the practices of the host country? Did the fact the most members of Diaspora live in consolidated democracies that are economically developed influenced their attitudes to support Iohannis? It might be that Diaspora not only acts as a catalyst for economic reform but they act through their political preferences that are influenced by their experiences. The analysis of the group of migrants that completed the VAA “Votulmeu” seems to confirm former question and refute the second. Alternatively it is more likely that self-selected pro reform individuals chose to live abroad and they are the driving force of electoral engagement abroad. I found that these individuals are not much different from the self-selected pro reform individuals that use the Internet and did not migrate. Much further data and better quality surveys are necessary before one would be able to link personal experience abroad to support for political parties that promise reform and change in a democratizing country.

Conclusion

Presidential elections in Romania seem to become peculiar events for the Romanian Diaspora. In 2009 the presidential elections brought the highest number of Romanian migrants to the polls. In 2014 this number more than doubled. It is the second time that the Romanian diaspora votes are decisive for settling the victor in the presidential elections.

Most research on labor migrants focuses on granting formal citizenship rights, the impact of economic remittance but not on political influence. The research on the political role of migrants is scarce. The issue becomes news depending on the closeness of the electoral contest because

there are simply too few migrants that vote, to influence the electoral context. This paper presented an apathetic Romanian diaspora that is absent from elections even if since the 2009 presidential elections the number of voters more than doubled. By increasing the number of voting stations where it matters facilitates turnout. Presidential elections bring more migrants to the polls. The paper examined the political preferences of migrants by inspecting elections results and a group of Romanian VAA users that intended to vote abroad. The election results show that Diaspora prefers to vote center-right parties and since 2012 favor new political parties as well. This aided the support for Klaus Iohannis. We found that although the electoral preferences of migrants are different from non-migrants they are not that different from the self selected individuals that completed the VAA application Votulmeu. Moreover the migrant status is not associated with support for Iohannis. Migrants that did not previously vote and have center-right wing party attachments support Iohannis. This argument holds true for the online users of VAA that do not migrate. More migrants supports gay marriage and less influence of religion in school and are pro choice. These attitudes do not translate in support for any political party. Further research depends on the availability of data. Ideally we have to take into account the years spent abroad, the tendency to turn back, income level, work status, access to media, integration in the receiving country and exposure to values of the receiving country. The political influence of Romanian migrants has increased despite the lack of interest and difficulty to cast a vote and it seems to be decisive when elections are close and every vote matters. It is more likely that new migrant voters, that feel close to a party to turnout and vote for their party. This means that political parties should invest more in mobilizing the electorate that lives abroad and not take their votes for granted.

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Table 1 Turnout of Romanians Living Abroad and Number of Voting Stations, 2000-2014

<u>Type of Election</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Turnout</u>	<u>Voting Stations</u>	<u>Countries</u>
Parliament/President 1 st Rd	2000	33,169	152	88
President 2 nd Rd	2000	16,331	152	88
Parliament/President 1 st Rd	2004	40,868	153	96
President 2 nd Rd	2004	40,149	153	96
President Dismissal Referendum	2007	75,027	186	95
European Parliament	2007	22,557	190	88
Parliament	2008	24,008	221	93
European Parliament	2009	14,330	190	94
President 1 st Round	2009	94,305	294	97
President 2 nd Round	2009	147,795	294	97
President Dismissal Referendum	2012	58,416	306	95
Parliamentary	2012	60,878	300	95
European Parliament	2014	30,248	190	92
Presidential 1 st Round	2014	161,262	294	95
Presidential 2 nd Round	2014	375,743	292	94

Table 2 Vote Preferences of the Romanian Diaspora By Percentage of Valid Votes Cast

	<u>PSD</u>	<u>PD-L</u>	<u>PNL</u>	<u>UDMR</u>	<u>USL</u>	<u>ARD</u>	<u>Other</u>
2007 European Parliament	8.84	44.10	10.31	2.78			33.97
2008 Chamber of Deputies	15.17	46.52	21.22	4.21			12.87
2008 Senate	13.23	46.46	23.52	5.12			11.67
2009 European Parliament	14.87	37.13	15.68	7.16			25.16
2009 President-First Round	12.41	56.05	17.43	1.06			13.05
2009 President-Second Round	21.14	78.86					
2012 Chamber of Deputies	-	-	-	1.89	27.32	27.27	43.52
2012 Senate	-	-	-	1.53	28.37	39.46	30.64
2014 European Parliament	11.05	15.71	8.63	1.22			63.39
2014 President-First Round	15.90	-	46.17	0.54			37.39
2014 President-Second Round	10.26		89.73				

Table 3 Voting intentions of VAA users compared to election results

Voting intentions	VAA		2014 Election results first round	
	migrants	non-migrants	migrants	all voters
Klaus Iohannis	34.5	40.4	46.17	30.37
Victor Ponta	1.7	4.8	15.9	40.44
Monica Macovei	53.7	38.0	15.2	4.44
Others	10.1	16.8	22.73	24.75

Table 4 Relevant dimensions identified through Mokken scaling (items that have a homogeneity coefficient higher than 0.3 the threshold for scalable items)

<u>Economy</u>	0.365
The free economic competition makes the health system work better	0.340
The number of employees from the public sector should be reduced	0.363
The state should intervene as least as possible in the economy	0.391
<u>Society</u>	0.426
Homosexual couples should enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples	0.442
The usage of cannabis as a recreational drug should be legal	0.394
Women should have the right to decide in matters connected to abortion	0.423
Religion should be a compulsory course in public schools	0.448
The state should offer a privileged status to the Orthodox Church	0.421

(Mokken analysis performed by Vasilis Manavopoulos: vmanavopoulos@gmail.com)

Table 5 Political preferences on issues of migrants and non-migrants (percentage agreeing)

	migrants	non-migrants
<u>Economy</u>		
The free economic competition makes the health system work better	57.2	60.3
The number of employees from the public sector should be reduced	65.8	65.5
The state should intervene as least as possible in the economy	50.6	55.1
<u>Society</u>		
Homosexual couples should enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples	74.6	55.6
The usage of cannabis as a recreational drug should be legal	49.9	41.6
Women should have the right to decide in matters connected to abortion	91.1	84.6
Religion should be a compulsory course in public schools	9.3	16.3
The state should offer a privileged status to the Orthodox Church	3.2	4.7

Table 6 Determinants of voting intentions of VAA users

The dependent variable is vote for Iohanis (logit estimates and standard errors in parantheses)

Age	.007**	.003	-.005
	(.002)	(.003)	(.005)
Gender	.046	.007	.027
	(.043)	(.071)	(.114)
Education	-.163*	-.036	-.196
	(.055)	(.091)	(.139)
Migrant	-.268**	-.299*	-.139
	(.072)	(.125)	(.178)
Interest in politics		-.239*	-.165
		(.097)	(.157)
Past Voting Behavior		-.236**	-.300*
		(.088)	(.134)
Center-right party identification		2.424***	2.587***
		(.099)	(.166)
Candidate selection /programmatic			-.589***
			(.105)
GAL-TAN			-.018
			(.117)
Left-Right			.275
			(.157)
Private health care			-.047
			(.116)
Reduce public sector			-.009
			(.127)
Market economy			-.110
			(.119)
Gay rights			-.068
			(.118)
Marijuana use			-.099
			(.115)
Pro-choice			-.034
			(.163)
Religion in school			.230
			(.171)
Pro-church			-.592*
			(.273)
Constant	-13.954***	-8.591***	7.787
	(4.379)	(6.701)	(10.415)
Nagelkerke R	.006	.255	.289

Table 7 Determinants of voting intentions of VAA users migrants and non migrants compared (the vote for Iohannis is the dependent variable-logit estimates)

Vote for Iohannis	non-migrants			migrants		
Age	.014*** (.003)	.010** (.004)	.002 (.006)	.025** (.010)	.028 (.015)	.045 (.025)
Gender	.059 (.061)	.031 (.070)	.029 (.115)	.139 (.137)	-.086 (.221)	.033 (.376)
Education	-.121 (.066)	-.107 (.075)	-.136 (.120)	-.265 (.196)	-.143 (.313)	.067 (.451)
Interest in politics		-.553*** (.085)	-.488*** (.144)		.374 (.314)	.586 (.523)
Past Voting Behavior		-.334*** (.076)	-.364** (.120)		-.421 (.224)	-.861* (.348)
Center-Right Party Identification		1.546*** (.072)	1.682*** (.113)		1.108*** (.261)	1.319** (.429)
Candidate selection /programmatic			-.880*** (.113)			-.735* (.344)
GAL-TAN			.035 (.121)			.406 (.312)
Left-Right			-.507** (.169)			.534 (.429)
Private health care			-.080 (.118)			-.211 (.343)
Reduce public sector			-.086 (.124)			-.786 (.405)
Market economy			-.113 (.122)			.344 (.388)
Gay rights			-.107 (.128)			-.652 (.465)
Marijuana use			.082 (.123)			-.069 (.364)
Pro-choice			-.179 (.168)			-.136 (.594)
Religion in school			.151 (.171)			.674 (.854)
Pro-church			-.551 (.290)			-.209 (.845)
Constant	-24.418*** (6.317)	-21.340** (7.411)	-2.583 (11.983)	-49.797*** (19.239)	-56.893*** (30.028)	-89.802***
Nagelkerke R	.010	.172	.243	.015	.105	.239

Appendix
Independent variables
Socio-Demographic variables

Migrant: This variable is coded 2 if a respondent declared that he/she will vote abroad and 0 otherwise. This coding is intended to make the clearest possible distinction between a migrant and a person that is not an emigrant.

Age: the respondents' year of birth

Gender: A dichotomous variable coded 1 for males and 2 for females

Education: An ordinal variable transformed in a dichotomous variable in which 2 represent respondents with graduate and postgraduate studies (BA, MA, PhD) and 1 is high school graduate and under

Political variables

Interest in politics: An ordinal variable transformed in a dichotomous variable in which 2 represents "I am very interested" and "somewhat interested" while 1 is represented by "I am little interested" and "I am not interested at all"

Past voting behavior: An ordinal variable transformed into a dichotomous variables in which 2 is represented by the persons that have voted and 1 by those who have not or did not remember that they have voted.

Center-right party identification: An ordinal variable transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 is represented by whoever declared that they feel close to PNL (National Liberal Party), PDL (The Democratic Liberal Party) or PMP (The Popular Movement Party) and 1 by all the others.

Issue variables

Candidate selection/ programmatic: It is the recoded answers to the question "What is the main reason you have chosen this candidate". It is an ordinal variable transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 is represented by "the ideas of the candidate are close to mine" and 1 is represented by the following answers: "more competent", "supports people like me", "my friend and family supported this candidate", "I like this candidate", "I identify with the candidates' party", "another reason", "I will not vote"

GAL-TAN: in a ordinal variable ranging from 0 to 10. 0 means liberal and 10 means conservatism. It was transformed into a dichotomous variable that measured center rights wing vote. 2 is represented by those that have chosen a position from 0 to 4 and the rest are placed at 1.

Left-Right: is an ordinal variable ranging from 0 to 10. 0 means full statism and 10 full liberalism in economy. It was transformed into a dichotomous variable that measured center right wing vote. 2 is represented by those that expressed a position from (6 to 10) and the rest are 1.

Private health care: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “The free economic competition makes the health system work better”. It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

Reduce public sector: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “The number of employees from the public sector should be reduced” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

Market economy Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “The state should intervene as least as possible in the economy” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

Gay rights: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “Homosexual couples should enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

Marijuana use: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “The usage of cannabis as a recreational drug should be legal” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

Pro-choice: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “Women should have the right to decide in matters connected to abortion” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

Religion in school: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “Religion should be a compulsory course in public schools” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

Pro-church: Respondents level of agreement with the following statement “The state should offer a privileged status to the Orthodox Church” It is an ordinal variables transformed into a dichotomous variable in which 2 means agreement with the issue.

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